

February 22, 2017

Dear Co-Chair Kennedy, Co-Chair Miner, Co-Chair Demicco, Vice Chair Flexer, Vice Chair Gresko, Vice Chair Somers, Ranking Member Harding, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

Please accept this public hearing testimony in **OPPOSITION to SB 832**.

I care about animals, including wildlife, and I vote. I strongly support and promote humane resolutions to conflicts with wildlife and preventative measures to minimize risk of such conflicts.

I oppose SB 832 as currently written for the following 4 reasons:

1) SB 832 does not address the major sources of habituation (e.g., accessible garbage, pet food left outside, certain types of bird feeders)! As currently written, SB 832 does not serve to address the issue of conflicts with potentially dangerous wildlife;

2) SB 832 would unfairly penalize those who care for community cats. Sec. 1 (e), which defines "potentially dangerous animal" for purposes of this section, includes "felidae," a broad family of felids that includes domestic cats. Community cat caregivers provide a public service at oftentimes great personal expense, reducing cat overpopulation through TNR (trap, neuter, return) programs, a science-based approach that has been proven effective. Absence of this public service would generate a near-immediate outcome of overcrowded conditions and stretched resources at animal control agencies and shelters. Rather than penalizing these generous caregivers, and stretching the already strapped animal care infrastructure, emphasis should instead be placed on proactive solutions, like laws and ordinances that focus on incentivizing spay/neuter and humane management programs for community cats;

3) SB 832 would be unpopular and unenforceable. Sec. 1 (e) contains the biological family names "felidae" and "canidae," which include domestic cats and domestic dogs. Inclusion of these categories would be hugely unpopular with Connecticut voters, and as a practical matter, unenforceable; and

4) Unlike last year's bill (2016's HB 5315), SB 832 makes no provision for education, and public education is precisely what is indicated here.

Substitute language should be considered that would address the matter of habituation and conflict prevention through public education on how to coexist with coyotes and bears. DEEP should partner with The Humane Society of the United States (a trusted leader in the fight to protect wildlife through community engagement) and our local animal welfare groups to develop educational materials that are effective, humane, science-based, and sustainable, and provide that such educational materials include the topics of removal of attractants and hazing techniques.

As an animal advocate and a volunteer for local shelters, I am a huge supporter of TNR for cats and it has proven very effective in the northeast corner of Connecticut. There currently are no laws that Animal Control agencies and municipal shelters have regarding feral (and domestic cat) so any issue regarding cats would not be answered. This would increase the cat population which in turn would increase sickness and the greater chance for rabies. There are many non-profit shelters that I volunteer for that run just by donations and many of them are full now with abandoned cats and kittens so their resources are stretched now. An accurate example is our regional animal shelter. They are a wonderful group of officers and volunteers, but unfortunately they have no law or mandates regarding cats And while they try and help when they can, many times voters in our community are turned away due to no resources. I manage a feral colony. When I first started, I had over 30 cats. I cannot count how many kittens I rescued. Once I trapped and neutered/spay them, the numbers went down. I know have 10 left that I care for. Feral and stray cats are a huge problem, but until there are laws governing them as we do for dogs we will always have a problem. Education, stricter laws regarding abandonment and abuse for cats as well as support for our regional animal shelters is what we need

I urge all of our senators, congressmen, state legislators and this committee to oppose SB 832!! Do not penalize the animal as this is not their fault.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,
Fay Beriau
Killingly, CT